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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINGSTON 000041

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR (BENT) AND INL/LP (KBROWN), DS/IP/WHA,
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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [JM](#)

SUBJECT: JCF COMMISSIONER FORBES OUT, LUCIUS THOMAS IN

REF: KINGSTON 02801

Classified By: Ambassador Sue M. Cobb for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: On Saturday, January 1, 2005, the Jamaica Police Service Commission (PSC) announced that it had accepted the resignation of Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) Commissioner, Francis Forbes, effective January 19. The PSC communique commended Forbes for his accomplishments as Commissioner and reported that he would be taking up a position with CARICOM as Director in the Project Implementation Agency for Crime and Security based in Port of Spain. Forbes, one of the youngest to hold the Commissioner's position, served in that capacity for eight years but opted for retirement two years earlier than expected. Deputy Commissioner Lucius Thomas will become the next JCF Commissioner. End Summary.

2. (C) In what could be considered a surprise announcement on New Years Day, the Police Service Commission (PSC) accepted the resignation of veteran JCF Commissioner Francis Forbes, effective January 19, 2005. Forbes' rapid rise through the JCF ranks made him one of the youngest and longest serving commissioners, having joined the force at age 19 in 1970 and becoming Commissioner in 1996. News reports speculated as to the timing of the announcement, commenting that his resignation was inevitable given the record 2004 murder rate and the public pressure for government to do something about crime in Jamaica.

Forbes' Legacy

3. (C) There were 1,469 murders in Jamaica in 2004, surpassing the previous year by more than 51 percent. Jamaica launched Operation Kingfish in October 2004 (Reftel) in an effort to stem the rising rate of gang-related violent crime but most of the Kingfish activities centered on international narcotics crimes prosecuted by other nations off Jamaican shores. Neither the JCF nor the Ministry of National Security (MNS) have won public confidence in the ongoing operation and the crime rate has not decreased accordingly. There have been several attempts at creating new programs and "operations" to deal with the escalating crime, all of which have failed. Forbes has not taken responsibility for the level of crime in Jamaica, claiming that he was not provided with the resources needed to effectively carry out programs to combat the problem.

4. (C) Working with the WHA-funded Law Enforcement Development Advisor (LEDA) Project, now in its third year, Commissioner Forbes had committed to the implementation of a JCF regionalization concept effective April 1, 2005, to coincide with the Jamaican fiscal year. However, during a private meeting with the LEDA after Forbes' departure announcement, Forbes indicated that the regionalization, a cornerstone of the restructuring of the JCF, could be cost prohibitive. (Note: The goal of the regionalization concept is to bring greater accountability and effectiveness to the JCF by breaking the island into four regions with one senior officer responsible for each region reporting directly to the Commissioner. Forbes' statement may be the reason he has not been more cooperative in implementing this phase of the overall reform project. End note.) In addition, the announcement that three foreign police officers, presumably from the UK, would be joining the JCF at the Deputy Commissioner level and be operational, leaves unclear the direction the JCF is planning to take. Forbes indicated to the LEDA that he was unaware of the role the UK officers would play indicating that he has been left out of the planning loop.

Thomas' Initiative

5. (C) Lucius Thomas is the current Deputy Commissioner for Crime and is the logical choice among the three current deputies. He will begin his duties as Commissioner on January 19. Although Thomas has lots of operational know-how, he lacks management experience. He will have to learn this most important aspect of the new assignment, "on

the job". (Comment: Post believes that Thomas will be effective in this position as he has collaborated with Post on different initiatives and has proven receptive to USG programs and interests. However, rumors and unsubstantiated allegations about Thomas suggest his possible involvement in corrupt conduct during his earlier years with the JCF. The allegations were never corroborated. End Comment.)

16. (C) During a meeting with Poloff in late December, Thomas explained that the increase in the murder rate is due in part to the increase in guns that come from the U.S. He alleged that 60 percent of the handguns that are on the streets in Jamaica come from ports in Miami and New York although he noted that there is definitely an increase in weapons coming from Haiti. Thomas implicated extortion and the drug trade as also playing a large role but noted that politics continue to play a part in the escalating numbers as the unavailability of government contracts, poverty, and the lack of "political will" in areas such as Clarendon and St. James continue to fuel violence.

17. (C) Explaining that the Constabulary Communications Network (CCN) is not a public relations entity, Thomas claimed that the GOJ must get out the word that "if you are not involved, you won't get killed." He explained that 95 percent of the individuals that have been victims of homicide are in some way related to the drug trade, extortion or some other illegal activity.

JCF Corruption is Out of Control

18. (C) Thomas lamented that corruption exists in virtually every part of the JCF. He stated that every illegal operation in Jamaica - gangs, drug runners, extortionists, etc. have at least two to three JCF officers involved. He noted that it is impossible for the illegal activity to take place without JCF assistance. Poloff inquired as to what was hampering the JCF from taking purposeful measures to address this, to which Thomas replied that the Commissioner does not have the authority to hire and fire. Effective measures to deal with JCF corruption is also complicated by the way the law is written and with police union backing for the accused, it could take years to have an officer removed. He also noted that no one will come forward as a witness to testify against another officer, describing this as a serious cultural problem within the JCF. He claimed that through intelligence sharing the JCF is now more capable of building a case, however, they are still hampered by ineffective policies.

19. (C) Comment: Public reaction to the announcement of Thomas as the new Commissioner has been positive. Thomas will be working under a microscope as he takes up the position in the wake of the highest murder rate in Jamaican history. Public sentiment underscores this fact with Jamaican citizens calling for Thomas to be provided with the resources necessary to do the job. Post will collaborate closely with the new Commissioner to urge the JCF to move forward with restructuring of the force. Whether or not Thomas will truly be an effective Commissioner remains to be seen; however, Post anticipates the presence of the LEDA will provide the necessary expertise in the area of management that Thomas is lacking. End Comment.
COBB